

BORDER MONITORING UPDATE

COVID-19 RESPONSE
26 APRIL – 2 May 2020



CHA staff (UNHCR partner) deployed to Islam Qala reception center 24 March 2020

CHA/ E. Karimi

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AFGHAN REFUGEES RETURNED TO AFGHANISTAN

Since 01 January, UNHCR assisted the return of over 300 Afghan refugees from Iran, Pakistan and other countries under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. As of 04 March, UNHCR suspended the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan, Iran and other countries as a precautionary measure linked to COVID-19.

272,868

UNDOCUMENTED AFGHANS RETURNED FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

According to MoRR/IOM, during the week of 26 April – 2 May, the total number of undocumented returnees from Iran was 5,801 and since 01 January, the total number of undocumented returnees is 272,868 individuals, including 271,035 from Iran and 1,833 from Pakistan. On 01 May 2020, the Government of Pakistan announced that Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points will be opened five days a week (Monday – Friday) for commercial purposes (both for Afghan transit trade and bilateral trade). Pedestrian movement of stranded Afghans and Pakistanis will be allowed once a week (Saturday), and a maximum of 500 persons will be allowed to cross into Pakistan through Torkham and 300 individuals through Spin Boldak crossing point.

UNHCR is aware of reports of the abusive treatment of a group of Afghans following their irregular entry into Iran, and of allegations of resulting loss of lives. According to initial information in media reports, a group of 57 Afghans who had irregularly crossed Afghanistan's border with Iran on Friday 1 May, were reportedly apprehended and beaten by Iranian border authorities and subsequently thrown into the Harirud River (shared by Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan). UNHCR has received testimonies detailing similar allegations of mistreatment of Afghans by Iranian border guards from other deportees from Iran.

BORDER MONITORING

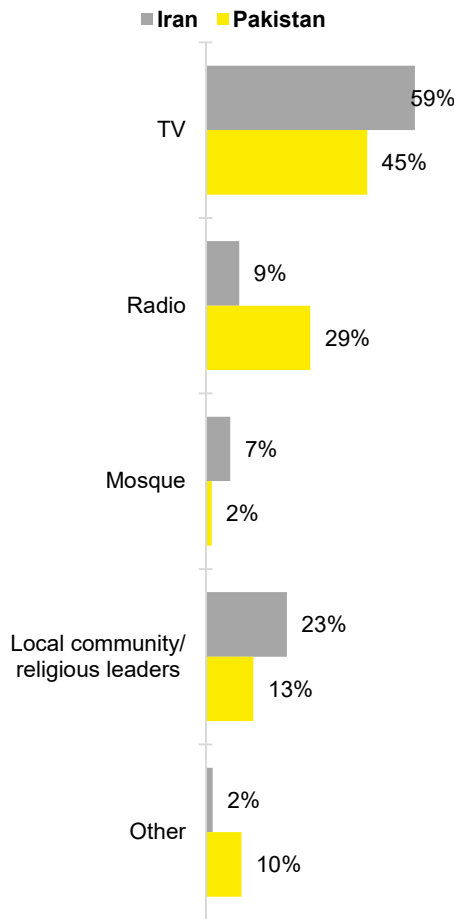
In line with UNHCR's protection monitoring objectives, and in the context of increased incidence of COVID-19 across the territory of Afghanistan, UNHCR made the decision to expand its protection and return monitoring activities to the official entry points with Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak crossing points), with the intention to extend to the crossings with Pakistan (Spin Boldak and Torkham) when opened. Through maintaining a consistent presence at these zero points, UNHCR aims to ensure efficient, timely and systematic gathering of protection information from Afghan returnees.

1,437

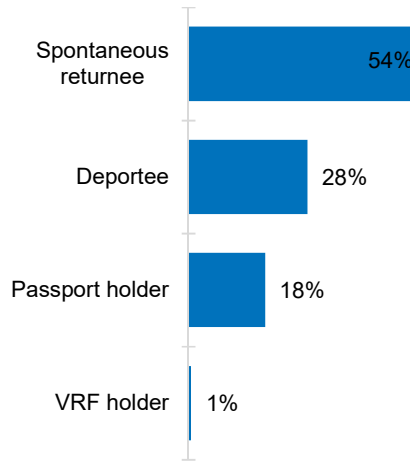
INTERVIEWS WITH RETURNÉES FROM IRAN AND PAKISTAN

Between 26 April – 2 May, 539 interviews, including 446 male and 93 female respondents, were carried out with returnees from Iran. Since the start of border monitoring on 05 April, a total of 1,437 returnees (1,178 M and 259 F) were interviewed as they entered Afghanistan from Iran at Zaranj/Milak (830), Islam Qala (545), and from Pakistan at Spin Boldak (62)¹, including 1,094 single individuals and 343 heads of households who returned with their families. **In total, 1,437 interviews were conducted with returnees from Iran (1,375) and Pakistan (62).**

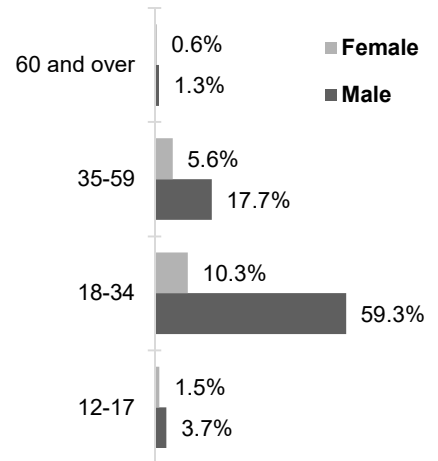
Primary Sources of Information about COVID 19 in Iran and Pakistan



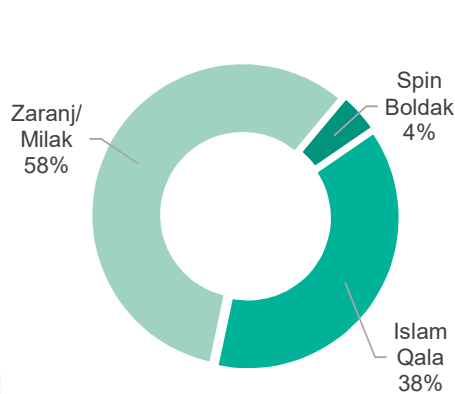
Respondents' Return Status



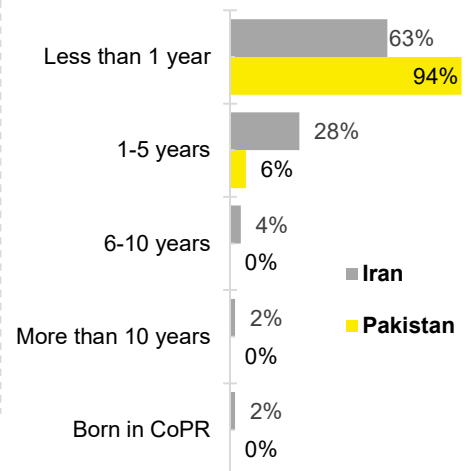
Respondents' Age and Gender



Respondents (%) by Entry Point



Years Spent in the CoPR



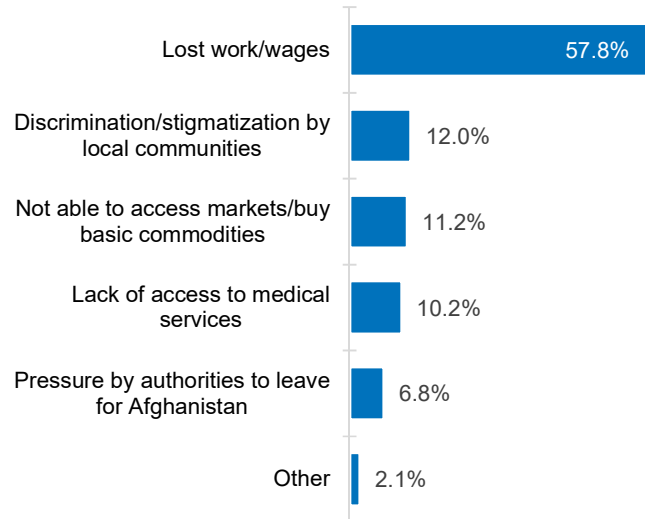
¹ Note that UNHCR will start its border monitoring activity at Torkham on 03 May 2020.

Situation in Country of Prior Residence (CoPR) - Pakistan and Iran

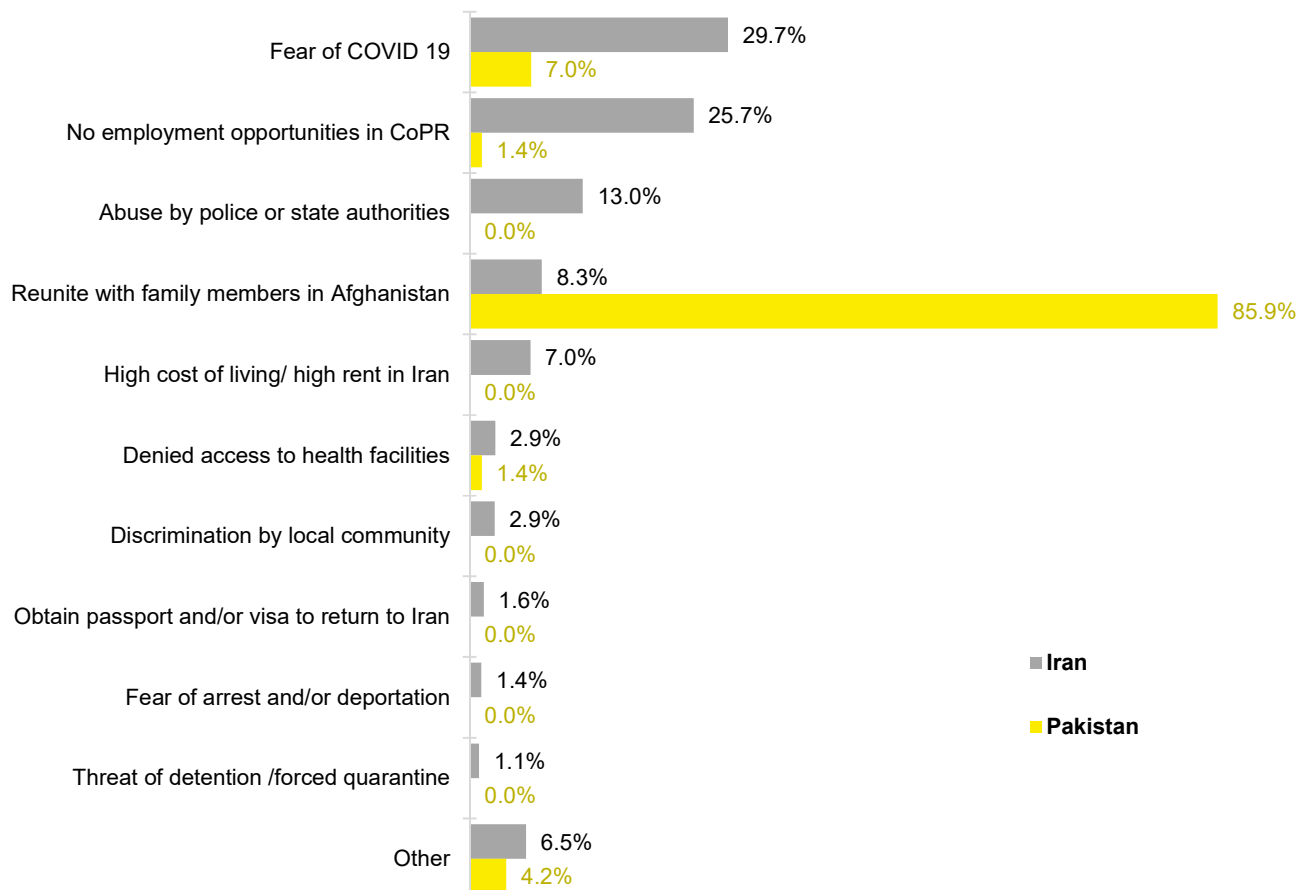
Interviewed Returnees from Iran (Islam Qala and Zaranj/Milak):

- 52% spontaneous returnees; 29% deportees; 18% passport holders and 1% VRF holders;
- Over 60% of the interviewed returnees stated that they returned from three provinces in Iran: Tehran, Sistan va Baluchestan, and Kerman;
- 77% went to Iran in search of livelihoods opportunities; 8% to visit family/relatives; 7% due to conflict, 3% due to drought; and 5% other reasons;
- 45% (621 respondents) claimed that they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak; such as lost work/wages; discrimination/stigmatization by local communities; lack of access to markets; and lack of access to medical services;
- 90% stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in Iran, mainly through TV and radio;
- 45% (625 respondents, most of whom were spontaneous returnees) claimed that they had paid a return tax to the government (100,000 – 500,000 IRR/ approximately USD 7-35).

Types of Problems faced by Afghans during COVID-19 in Iran



Reason for Return to Afghanistan



Information Dissemination in Afghanistan

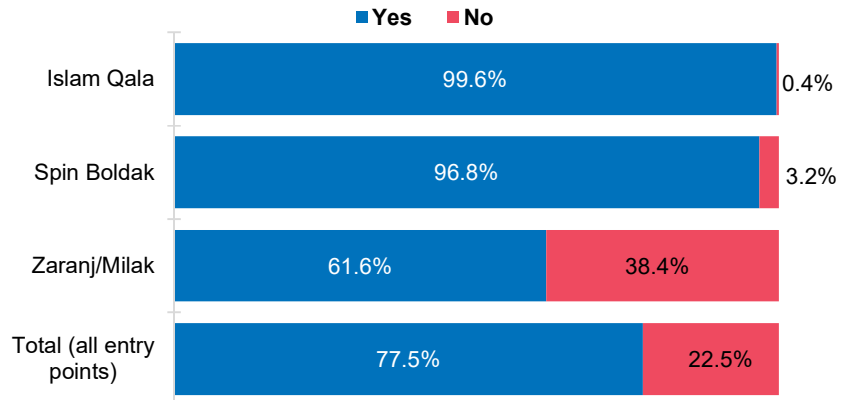
78%

OF INTERVIEWED RETURNEES STATED THAT THEY RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

38%

INTERVIEWED RETURNEES THROUGH ZARANJ/MILAK CLAIMED THAT THEY DID NOT RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 UPON ARRIVAL IN AFGHANISTAN

Did you receive information upon arrival in Afghanistan?



Areas of Return in Afghanistan (origin vs intended destination)

- Returnees from Iran were travelling to 33 provinces across the country, mainly to Herat, Kunduz, Farah, Nimroz, Faryab, Ghazni, Ghor, Takhar, Sar-e-pul, and Badakhshan provinces.
- Returnees from Pakistan were traveling to more than 20 provinces.
- Most returnees from Pakistan have returned to Kandahar, Paktika and Ghazni provinces.

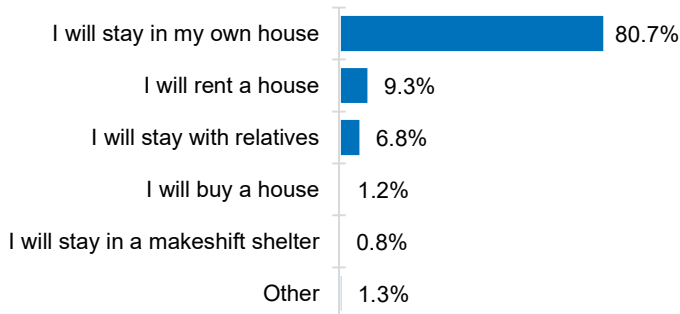
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan
Interviewed Returnees from Iran

Province	Origin	Destination
Herat	211	173
Kunduz	135	16
Farah	117	14
Nimroz	108	30
Faryab	102	68
Ghazni	92	17
Ghor	86	51
Takhar	82	29
Sar-e-Pul	64	42
Badakhshan	58	16

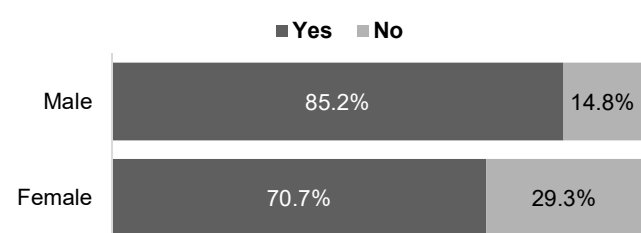
Top Province of Return in Afghanistan
Interviewed Returnees from Pakistan

Province	Origin	Destination
Kandahar	13	13
Paktika	13	13
Ghazni	12	12
Kabul	4	7
Baghlan	3	3
Logar	3	2
Maidan Wardak	3	2
Hilmand	2	2
Kunduz	2	2
Zabul	2	2

Living Arrangements after Return



Tazkira* Ownership among Returnees from Iran and Pakistan



*Tazkira is the official identity card issued by the Government of Afghanistan for Afghan nationals.

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